5—Complete Stories—5

The Black Cat

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Edward Stratton Holloway.

Mrs. Thompson's Account of It.
$200 Prize Story.
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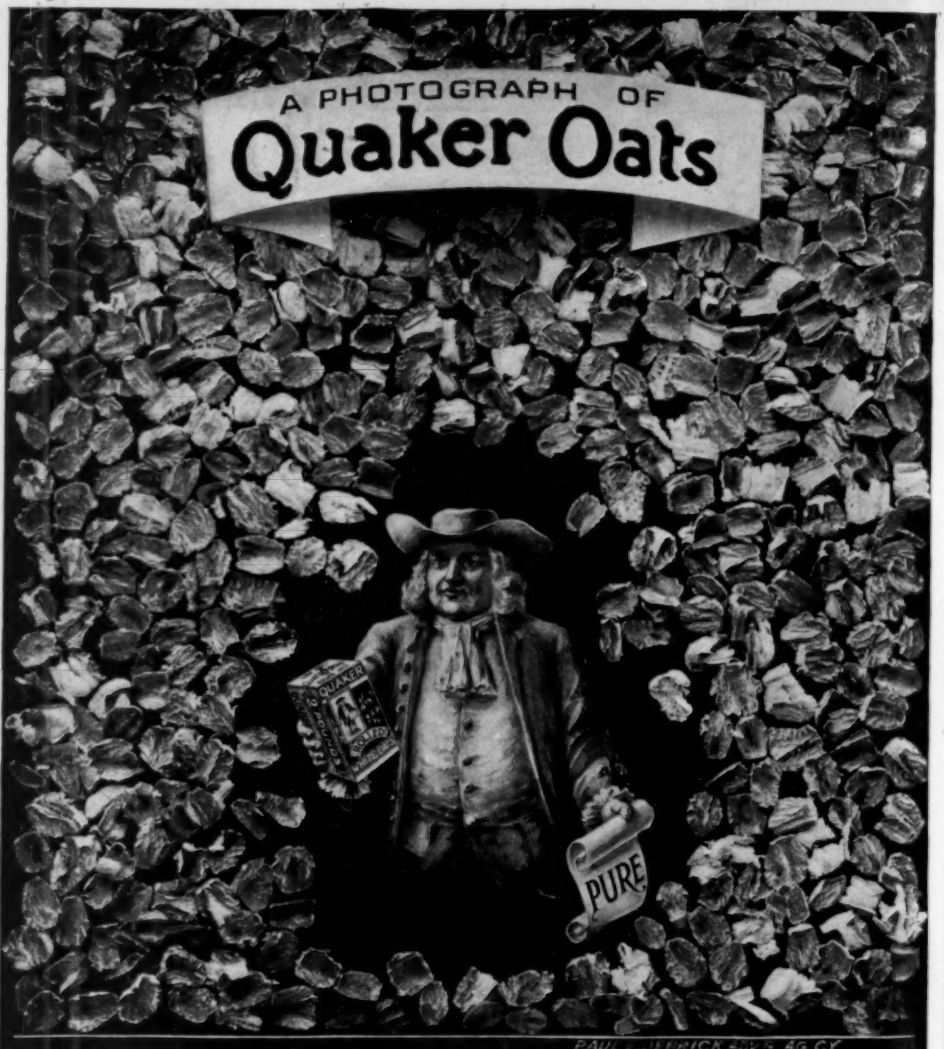

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The Black Cat

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Out of the Desert.*

BY EDWARD STRATTON HOLLOWAY.

DENBY'S introduction to Paul Ordway was particularly informal. Ordway, at the time, was lying on his back on the sands of the desert, his right shoulder crushed by the hammer-like blow of a tiger.

Denby, with his beaters, had been following the spoor of this particular tiger since early morning, and, at a spot where the jungle straggled off into the desert, had thrown himself down, weary, begrimed with sweat and the reek of vegetation, and torn with the undergrowth.

While his men were opening out the provender, he pushed a few yards further through the high grass and bush till the burning sand lay before him.

"Ugh!" he breathed.

It was a flaming furnace — even the torrid heat of the jungle cool by comparison. The air vibrated as it does over red-hot plates of iron — but to him it was glorious. The "everlasting hills" bored him everlastingly, he revelled in an illimitable expanse of sand or sea, with the fathomless, illimitable sky above it.

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Here the sand was ochre yellow, the sky topaz; he stared till his eyes ached.

The scanty lunch was eaten in silence. Denby would not even regale himself with a pipe. They might at the moment be almost upon their quarry, a slightly lame, man-eating tiger — the scourge of the district. Two days before he had carried off a boy. A deputation from the village, a league or two away, had sought out Denby and begged him to kill the beast. He was now engaged in that pleasing quest, and the morning's hard work had somewhat dampened his ardor. Either from weariness or the heat, he dozed for a few moments.

Then a rifle shot pulsed through the hot air, and he threw himself over and over to his feet, seized his Express, and plunged through the rukh.

On the sandy spot vacant a few moments before, with blood streaming down his tawny chest, the man-eater stood over the body of Ordway. His fury was ungovernable — in an instant his prey would have been torn limb from limb.

The crashing of the bushes showed him his new enemy. He swayed slightly from side to side as he stood, and then crouched to spring.

Denby drew his sleeve hastily across his still blinking eyes, and sank upon one knee. It was to be the shot of a lifetime — for his own life and another — and he had never been worse handicapped. The fierce light beat down upon him, the air vibrated, the arm he had used as a pillow was numb. He pulled the trigger. The spring of the tiger carried him almost to where Denby knelt — but the bullet had gone home.

Ordway was nearly as badly off as the tiger. But one does not knock about the Orient many years without learning something about wounds — penetrating, incised and lacerated — and Denby felt that, if there were any life in him, he could patch him up till they got back to the village.

When the clothing was cut away from the wounded man's shoulder there was disclosed a hideous tangle of crushed bone and severed arteries worthy the perfect resources of a modern hospital. But Denby's deft fingers did not shrink from their compulsory task. When it was done he forced a few drops of brandy between

the teeth of Ordway, who moaned — and then gasped a woman's name.

When a man does that it looks bad for him. He usually does that at the end. Ordway opened his eyes.

"If I — go out — package."

To satisfy him Denby explored what was left of his hunting jacket and showed him the parcel. "I understand. I will do it," he said.

Ordway sank back again, unconscious.

As Denby walked beside the litter, steadying it during the long passage home, he looked curiously at Ordway. Even the wreck of the man as it lay there, and his solitary errand in the desert, told something of his character. No culpable recklessness had brought him to this. He was a *man*. Denby knew that kind, and ventured to believe that not many of his shots had missed their mark. Even his last bullet, deep in the lung of the tiger, would have finished the beast — in time — but there had been no time.

. . . . . .

It was weeks afterward — when they had become like brothers — that Paul Ordway said to Denby: "You must know it all — about the package — or, rather, the woman back of it. I didn't find the experience at all dull to live through, so perhaps it won't bore you.

"They tell me that before I could walk I showed my independence of humanity by ignoring it. My independence of women was shown by my insisting that I be brought up by the "buttons" and not by the nursemaid. And even when I got older — well, all boys, I fancy, regard girls mainly as inferiors and chattels — but for me they simply didn't exist."

He chuckled and puffed his cigarette — an Egyptian cigarette, out in the African jungle!

"I remember, of course, the floating frock and sash at school and in the houses of my friends, but hardly a face or a feminine name can I recall out of all the throng I must have met in those early days. The flower of chivalry, however, bloomed again in my love for my mother. I idolized my beautiful mother. I won't tire you with such details — I mention them — well, you will see why.

"I remember the Christmas when I was sixteen — sixteen seems to be a landmark, somehow. It was then that I came into possession of my first gun. That gun had been my dream for two years. There was a tremendous display of other gifts, but that was the crown. After I had examined every part of its mechanism, I laid it down with a happy sigh. One arm went around my big father and the other around my little mother (even then I was above her head) and I squeezed till both cried for mercy.

"Among my other numerous gifts was a new-fangled pincushion, with the pinheads arranged in the name of 'Maisie.' Mother called my attention to it, and said I must send something in return. I felt helpless. Send something to a girl!

"'What did she do it for?' I exclaimed, indignantly.

"'You're a queer boy,' was my mother's only answer.

"When I thanked Maisie Richmond later, not ungracefully, I fancy, for I was no boor — girls simply did not enter into my calculations — I could not restrain the same question:

"'What did you do it for, Maisie?'

"She looked at me strangely. 'You're a queer boy!' Then, with a flash of anger in her eyes, she wheeled around and left me — with my hands in my pockets.

"It was the *women* who were queer, I vowed, and with my new gun I riddled the gate posts with buckshot.

"As I grew older, I took social life as it came, but was rather well liked. I danced because it was the time and place to dance, and waltzed better than any man in my set.

"If a man works a sufficient number of years for a thing he wants badly, he usually gets it — eventually. If he doesn't want it under any consideration, he gets it instantly. I cared little for money — and every investment 'the governor' made seemed to double the principal. There were other things I got which, God knows, I didn't want. Glances that — hurt — because I couldn't return them. I hated them. What I cared for was to rule men — to outsail, outswim and outshoot any man I knew — that was the breath of life to me, and I filled my lungs with it. I cared nothing for women, but — I loved my mother with all my heart's devotion — and she died."

For a moment Paul Ordway paused. Then he went on rapidly:

"For a year or two after my mother's death I stayed at home. Then the young man's restlessness came upon me with renewed force. I took short trips, I shot everything in sight, I went out a good deal. It was no use. One day I bought a 'P. & O.' ticket for Suez. It was three years before I saw London again, and then I came back by a Cunarder from New York. There wasn't much on this old globe that I hadn't been through."

Denby laughed. "Yes, you raved about some of those experiences in your delirium. If you'd had your Desdemona here, those harrowing incidents would have moved her heart within two days."

Ordway regarded Denby narrowly.

"Um. If I've been babbling like that about things, I shall have to make a clean breast of it, shan't I?

"Well, I must own it seemed rather good to get back to the whirligig and evening clothes again. And then — came the woman who couldn't be ignored. Her spirit was like my own, and my wooing was — savage."

At the recollection Paul Ordway's white teeth gleamed as he set them together.

"It was great — the tussle! On our fourth meeting, when presented by our hostess, I made the conventional acknowledgment.

"She said 'I have already met Mr. Ordway three times, and he danced with me the other evening at Lady Beardsley's.' She rippled a laugh and added, 'I presume the presentations will continue until I make impression enough for him to remember me.'

"To my chagrin, there was not a particle of it in her own tone — for I was quite aware of the fact she had stated. The impression had been deep enough, in all conscience, at the first meeting — but I did not intend that *she* should know it. I was inwardly furious that a woman should interest me, and I must own that I had rather a bad week of it.

"But, if I were interested, some one else should be, if the management of affairs rested at all with me. I murmured a request for pardon and 'regretted that I should not have the opportunity of redeeming myself, as I was off the next morning for a fortnight in Norway.' That had been the resolution of an instant. I paid her rather marked attention the remainder of the evening — then stayed in Norway six weeks.

"When I returned, she was reported to be engaged to young Sutherland — second son of the Admiral, you know — though no public announcement had yet been made. When we met, her manner was as pleasant and as indifferent as if I had bowed my farwell but the evening before. I felt that the first skirmish had not resulted to my particular advantage."

Ordway drummed on the leg of his camp stool, lit another cigarette, and then broke out —

"And that was the whole damnable story, from first to last! Always imperturbable, elusive, maddening! She had nerves of iron and the self-control of a goddess. It was well for me that I could match her at that, for I needed it all — I never felt for a moment that I had secured the slightest hold on her. Her self-containment was fortress-like. By Jove, it wasn't womanly — I didn't admire her for it. I loved her despite it, and not because of it!"

"Paul," drawled Denby, "omit the lamentations. Tell me something really interesting — about Zabetta, for instance!"

Ordway sat up very suddenly. Then, with a quizzical gesture of abandonment: "More babblings, eh? It seems as if you could tell this tale as well as I can! However, Zabetta Hart does come in about here somewhere. I knew she was unsafe, vindictive — but she had her fascinations — and I wanted to make my Deity of Independence jealous.

"Zabetta had been very nice to me. It was the old story — piqued by my indifference, she would use any means to bring me to her feet. It afforded her amusement, and I let her try it. It afforded me equal amusement, which was duly set down in the bill, and for which I paid to the very last farthing. It was rather a fast and furious affair. While I was doing it I did it well. It *had* to be thorough to mislead Mam'selle Indifference.

"It did seem to affect her a little — but not for her own sake. She appeared sorry to see me drifting in that direction. It is wonderful how a woman can wrap the toils around one — even when he doesn't care. One night I gasped to see how I was enmeshed; it meant immediate yielding, or a smashing of the web. I took another trip to Norway.

"While I was away I received a letter from an old friend —

Billy Carruthers — a good fellow, really one of the salt of the earth, but scatter-brained and horribly careless. Poor Billy deserved a better fate than the gods had decreed him — three years' fruitless courtship of a woman hardly good enough for him. You say he should have thanked the gods for the fruitlessness! Well, he didn't.

"Billy unknowingly scored open my worst wound. He wrote:

"'You have always been so successful with women! If you can communicate the secret, old chap, do it! Out of the goodness of your heart, do it!'

"My laugh was mirthless enough, but I communicated the secret, to the best of my ability. I knew of but one way, and if it had been worthless in my own case, possibly I was the exception.

"'Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.' I wrote careless Billy Carruthers, and, as a man is never so oracular as on the one point in which he has met signal defeat, I said something like this:

"'Billy, the women love us — only God knows why. As for dealing with the dear creatures, I know one maxim — just one. Keep the supremacy — over yourself and over her — if you can get it. Sacrifice anything of your own — sacrifice almost anything of hers — but keep *that*. Suppose you lose it? You may not always have lost it when you think you have, but *if* you have, regain it quickly, or — well, there are various methods of suicide!'

"I sent it off — and was ruined by an epigram. The thing caught Billy's fancy, and he must show it to the first person handy — which happened to be Zabetta Hart. Miss Hart also happened to be the one person who knew for whom I cared. While seeking to enmesh me herself, she had seen the little fissure in my armor. She now proceeded to jab a lance through it.

"I was back in London in time for Lady Atherton's dance, arriving rather late. There was a crush, and I had little difficulty in making my way unobserved, save by a few of my friends, to a point of vantage. At last I saw Her, talking with my old white-haired, benign preceptor, Professor Maxwell. He had been her grandfather's dearest friend, and her eyes were lit up now with affection and respect. I had never seen her so entirely lovable, and I found myself moving towards her.

"As I neared them he turned slightly and saw me. With both hands outstretched, he called 'Ordway.' I saw her start, but her face was one of ordinary welcome when I joined them. Her attitude was still most gracious and winning, though she did not often address me directly.

"Were it not that man's love for woman is an honorable thing, I would be ashamed to tell you how I was affected. I listened dreamily, joining in their conversation with a word here and there, but almost unconscious of all save her. Her presence filled me with intoxication. I dared not look at her. Then the professor departed.

"'May I have this waltz?' I asked.

"As she came into my arms and we swept on together, I trembled. She looked up. 'What is the matter?' she asked.

"'Nothing,' I whispered triumphantly. 'If I have you, nothing in heaven or earth matters. I love you. I love you!' The pressure of my arms must have hurt her.

"Disengaging herself she said, 'Come with me.'

"We slipped through the portière into a little empty ante-room, and there she faced me.

"'Your honor is unimpeachable. How I respect you!' she said with a sweeping bow of mockery.

"Startled as I was, I stood there calmly — and then said:

"'I do not comprehend. I ask you to be my wife.'

"'And you *dare* to ask me that!' Her voice trembled with anger.

"I came nearer to her, with my arms tightly folded. 'I do. We are at odds. I see something is wrong. We may be intruded upon at any moment. Tell me all you have to say.'

"Her tones bit all the harder for their fierce repression when she said:

"'You have been dastardly from first to last.'

"I could feel the dull purple suffuse my face, but I clenched my hands under my folded arms.

"'Look at the first few times I met you. I know perfectly that you remembered — and yet what did you do! No one I ever have known has dared to take such a step with me. *You* would have paid dearly for it, but I must own I was puzzled as to your

motive, and held back till I should understand. Your reputation saved you. I had heard you highly spoken of — as a gentleman — and yet you acted as a cad to me.'

"She looked me in the eyes and again I saw the puzzled look cross her countenance. My own had told her nothing.

"'Then your later manner toward me — when I suffered you to continue the acquaintance. At times you were so kindly, so courteous' — she laughed mockingly — 'yes, so tender — and then so overbearing as to be offensive, though you tried to carry it off with your easy laugh.

"'Sometimes you tried to flout me. For myself I did not care — you only amused me — but you made me despise you. Not always, I will admit. I did believe you had a better nature, though you manifested very little of it in my sight. And finally, what did you do?'

"'I do not know,' I interrupted calmly. I was bent on learning it all, and felt sure of hearing it now.

"'You — do — not — know! Then you say little for yourself as a man, Mr. Ordway. After your brusque independence toward women in general and your almost insulting manner toward me, you court and fall at the feet of perhaps the most desperate flirt you happen to know. You apparently show yourself in earnest at last — you compromise her — and then, you run away!

"'Your actions are incomprehensible, until'— and she made me another courtesy — 'you put your theories into writing — for public circulation, apparently, for you write to a *sieve*, who cannot hold them and who,' she laughed, 'showed them to the very girl you had forsaken. Charming theories those — to browbeat and dominate women until they fall at your feet. Have many of them fallen at your feet, Mr. Ordway?'

"Her scorn was beyond further words.

"'Now,' said I, 'hear me. I am a plain man — too busy to learn eloquence — and I will brush your pretty arraignment away like a cobweb.'

"She looked at me with open eyes.

"'Forget,' said I, 'your prettily arranged standpoint — arranged for you by Zabetta Hart — and take mine. You speak of my independence toward women. You are perfectly right. I *felt*

that independence. I did not disturb them. I did not care to have them disturb me. You speak of brusqueness and an ungentlemanly manner. There you are wrong. Notwithstanding my independence, some of my best friends are women — sensible women. They know that they can trust me. They have even, some of them, given me their confidence. They know it is safe. Now, as to yourself. The first time I met you I loved you.'

"'Oh,' she said, 'you are insufferable.'

"'Wait,' said I. 'I have let you pile upon my head insults for which I would have killed a man. Now, listen to me.

"'I loved you, and (I know men and women) I saw what you were — that you were a strong, self-sustained nature — that you would tolerate no weak man. I am not particularly noted for my weakness, but I would have been as rotten thread in your hands had I showed you my interest.

"'Your own interest I *had* to arouse, at whatever cost. I did — what I did. As for my subsequent manner, to win you I saw I must dominate you. If I have failed, it simply means that I am not the man for whom you could ever care. No other method would have done me better service.

"'Now, as to Miss Hart. If she deserves any consideration at your hands, I pray you give it to her. At mine she deserves none. I enter into no particulars, I betray no woman's actions, but I know that when I say I owe her no consideration whatever, you will believe me.

"'My letter to Carruthers was written in confidence — lay the fault at his door. I may have been foolish to so write him, but I did it to help him. In his case, at least, the advice was good.

"'Miss Hart saw those words and used them. She knows perfectly that the only woman for whom I ever cared is you. She has taken revenge on me through my love for you — and she seems to have succeeded admirably. I have said all that I had to say.'

"She was inexorable.

"'Mr. Ordway,' she said sweetly, 'you may have lost it when you think you had not; and, oh, well, there are various methods of suicide!'

"She laughed. And that laugh nearly killed my love for her. I thought it dead indeed when she added:

"'From the way you have spoken, I credit you with being ignorant of the fact that I accepted Mr. Sutherland last evening. I hope you will come to the wedding.'

"The blow was heavy. I could not find words. Then I flamed out 'No! I never want to see your face again.'

"Still smilingly and sweetly, she said, 'I shall certainly send cards.'

"I remained in London a week, and every one congratulated me on the good my trip had done me, as they had 'never seen me so jolly.' Then I went away again.

"Three days before the wedding I was in an out-of-the-way part of Spain. One of those sudden impulses for which no man can account took possession of me. I would see that wedding. To do it I spent money like water for special conveyances and special connections.

"When I reached the church the bridal party was at the altar. I dropped into the end of a pew on the centre aisle near the foot of the church. It was horrible."

The drops stood on Ordway's forehead.

"The greatest agony a man can suffer is to hear the woman he loves give herself to another. As she came down the aisle on Sutherland's arm the church was whirling around me. I gripped the pew before me to stand steady, and then a calm came over me.

"My eyes were fixed upon her face. She raised her head and saw me. We looked into each other's eyes. She faltered and almost fell.

"She had made a mistake — and, for the first time, she knew it.

"It seemed as if a million instruments were dinning a song of triumph into my ears. It was only later that the ghastliness of the situation struck me. She loved me and was Sutherland's wife.

"An hour later, I was at the reception. She had retired to her rooms to change into travelling costume. I wandered through the crowded apartments, speaking to one and another of my friends, coolly, laughingly, but with the blood pumping through my body.

"It was the hardest work I ever did. I took refuge in the deserted library, where some of the unused wedding invitations lay on the desk. Her maid passed the door, on an errand. On

another impulse, I called her in, scored two bold dashes through one of the invitations, wrote something beneath, and sent it sealed to Mrs. Sutherland. This is what I wrote."

Ordway took a paper from his pocket and laid it on Denby's knee. It was the defaced invitation, and under it was scrawled:

"If you live with that man — now — I shall kill him."

Denby stared. "What did she do?"

"Turn it over."

In a bold, angular hand were the words:

"Thanks awfully, but I do not need your courteous suggestion. I am packing and not long after you get this I shall be where neither he nor you can find me."

Ordway said nothing more.

"Well?" said Denby.

"That is all," he replied.

"All!"

"Certainly. That was two years ago. I came out here," he laughed, "to provide food for tigers, I suppose."

"And you mean to say you made no effort to find her?"

Ordway, looking his friend squarely in the eyes, answered:

"She was another man's wife."

"But I mean — you don't know whether she is alive or dead? You have kept no trace of her or him? You have sunk yourself in the wilds of Africa, where no one can communicate with you?"

Grasping Denby's knee with his heavy hand, Ordway said:

"You apparently do not know me even yet. Fate, circumstance, took her away from me. When Fate has anything to say to me, she can follow and say it."

It was then that Denby took from his pocket a three-months-old London newspaper, treasured since certain names had been on Ordway's lips again and again in his raving. In it there was a head-line reading, "Young Sutherland's Body Washed Ashore at Last." As he handed it to Ordway and walked off, he said:

"Fate, like woman, is apparently weak — if the man is strong."

But it is doubtful if Ordway heard.

Mrs. Thompson's Account of It.*

BY EMILY HEWITT LELAND.

IT is over now, and I am glad to say, most happily; but never again, for love or money, will I lend myself and my peace of mind to a similar arrangement.

It came about in this way: When my dear husband died two years ago, leaving me with little money and an invalid daughter, it was as if a warm, protecting wall between me and the north wind had been suddenly removed. He was a kind, thoughtful man, with good ideas about everything, and in the twenty years of our married life I had learned to depend on him in all matters, from the ordering of the roast for dinner to the selection of my wraps and bonnets — for, the dear knows, a little dumpy woman like me never finds it easy to choose becoming things. But now that I am settled down to plain mourning I shall have no trouble in millinery directions — which is one grain of comfort.

Fortunately, our house, with its pretty garden at the back, and decent neighbors, was left us — every shrub and vine reminding me of the taste and care of him who had departed — and there was a steady demand for our front and back parlors and the little room off, that answered for library, pantry or dressing-room, according to the ways of the various occupants.

When the great Exposition opened I did not hesitate long before putting up my prices like all the rest, for I saw it was my chance to secure for my poor Elsie a few months in some good sanitarium. But lodgers came and went just the same, and very cheerfully added their dollars to the fine, growing sum which I kept — where, do you think? — in my molasses jug! Of course I had carefully washed and dried the jug, and there it stood on my

* This is one of two stories that received the prize of $200 in THE BLACK CAT competition ending March 31, 1898.

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pantry shelf between the vinegar and boiled cider, as innocent as you please, with its label of "N. O. Molasses," and I never worried about burglars breaking into it.

Well, in the very biggest rush and jam of the summer *they* came. The young man came first — a good-looking, nice-appearing boy of twenty-four or so — and was willing to pay any price within bounds for a comfortable, quiet room all to himself, where he could sleep daytimes — he being employed on a big morning paper. He wished to bring a cooking-lamp and a few conveniences for preparing a simple meal before going to his night-work. I suppose he saw some objection in my face — some of my parlor lodgers having had cooking-lamps and one of them upsetting a chicken pot-pie on my best rug — for he hastened to say that all he wanted was a cup of coffee and home-made bread, if it could be had in the neighborhood, with cheese and fruit and things of that sort.

Now, I make very good bread, both brown and white, and here was a chance to add to the molasses jug from an unthought-of source. I would not only arrange a little upper back room, hitherto used for trunks and bedding, for this poor, struggling boy, but I would bake his bread and charge accordingly.

The next morning he came, bag and baggage, and I must say the little store-room was not half bad, with its clean matting, fresh curtains at the one window that looked down on the garden, and a bowl of roses on the small bureau.

On account of limited space the bed had to be a folding lounge, but it was a very comfortable one, and Elsie had given me her gay little slumber-quilt to throw across the foot of it to make it look homelike. The transom over the door made a comfortable draft, and the smell of growing and blossoming things came pleasantly in from the garden.

Mr. Richards — that was his name — said it was all very nice, and he drew a long breath as if quite weary, and I noticed his eyes looked tired and a little sad. I always feel so sorry for young people with sad eyes!

I told him I truly hoped he would be suited, and explained the folding lounge, and showed him a cupboard at the end of the hall where he could keep his housekeeping supplies. There were two

divisions with a key to each, and I gave him the right-hand one. Then thinking of his sad eyes — and maybe also of the molasses jug — I offered to furnish cream and butter very reasonably with the bread for his five o'clock coffee. He turned to me with a grateful look and said I had lifted a load from his mind, for he detested individual marketing; and then he handed me a month's rent and bowed himself into his room.

Well, Mr. Richards had been under my roof two weeks, and giving me no more trouble than a mouse — and not near so much, for I am mortally afraid of a mouse — when *she* came. She came in the early evening when luckily I had just finished setting Mr. Richards' little room in order — and he was so nice about putting his clothes away and making no litter with his possessions that the place might have belonged to some tidy woman, so far as its looks went. She was dressed in complete mourning and looked pale and sad, although with her round face and a dimple that showed whenever she smiled the least bit, I was sure she would be cheerful if given half a chance, and my heart went out to her — so young, and in her pitiful black clothes.

She wanted a room and the privilege of preparing her own breakfasts and suppers, and she would be away at her work through the day.

Now every cranny of my house was full — unless — and here the wild plan which led to such constant watchfulness and wearing anxiety jumped into my mind. She would be obliged to go very early to her work, she said, and would only make toast and coffee in the morning, and all she wanted for supper was bread and milk. She would be so *little* trouble — and the dimple dimpled at me so coaxingly.

I told her I feared the only room I had would be too small and too plain to suit, but if she would like to look at it — and I led the way. There was still a faint odor of coffee in the room and a pair of very manly-looking overshoes peeped from under the bureau. I caught them up and held them behind me while we conversed. She had charge of some bazaar or other at the Exposition and expected to have the work until the close in October. She was obliged to live as inexpensively as possible. And this dear little room seemed so quiet and so far removed from all the

confusion. And the outlook on the garden was so sweet. She would be very glad to secure it. And what would be the terms? I trembled, but I thought of Elsie, and I named the terms — and in spite of the sad little face and the black clothes, they were in keeping with the times.

"I will take the room," she said, with a little sigh of resignation over my flinty price, "and I will come to-morrow evening at about seven."

"And at what time will you be going away mornings?" I asked as casually as possible.

"Oh, dreadfully early! I must breakfast at six and be in my place at seven sharp. But I have a chafing dish, and I've learned to be very expeditious in cooking and dressing and everything. But will you kindly have your maid call me at half-past five? — for sometimes I am *so* sleepy."

I assured her that I would gladly waken her myself, being always an early riser. And if she would like home-made bread and crullers and things of that sort, with fresh cream and butter from my refrigerator, I thought I could make it convenient to supply them — at a reasonable price. Like Mr. Richards, she accepted my offer with pleased satisfaction, and my heart leaped joyfully, thinking of the by-and-by harvest from the molasses jug.

She came — with chafing dish and shaded lamp, a basket of pretty china, a two-story Saratoga, which luckily had to remain in the hall, and various graceful trifles which all young women love to have about them, but which in this case I would gladly have had her leave behind.

She came — and four whole days passed before the awful possibilities of Sunday dawned upon me. Mr. Richards' big morning paper went on, Sunday or no Sunday, but the Exposition was piously closed on that day. Miss Franklin would naturally remain in her room, or merely go out to church for an hour, and what was to be done? I felt that I had already a sufficiently harrowing time — remodelling the room, so to speak, in the morning for Mr. Richards and clearing it up in the evening for Miss Franklin. More than once I had what my dear husband would have called a close shave. Miss Franklin fell asleep again one morning, after being wakened, and had hardly dashed down the front steps

without her breakfast — except for a glass of milk which I almost poured down her throat — before Mr. Richards came up them; and I made him wait in the lower hall while, with some lying excuse about his "forgotten" room, I hustled Miss Franklin's numerous belongings pell-mell into my clothes-press. And one afternoon Mr. Richards lingered so long over his refreshments — probably reading or writing, for I heard the rustle of paper and the occasional deliberate movement of his coffee-cup — that I nearly fainted with fear as I whisked his possessions away and brought out and arranged the Franklin properties in their accustomed order. Then Mr. Richards left his side of the hall-cupboard ajar on the third evening, showing plainly a chunk of cheese, a salt-shaker and the remnants of peanut sandwiches, which Miss Franklin must have noticed, for she asked me next morning if there were other light-housekeepers on our floor, and I was obliged to vaguely prevaricate. And I had always to keep the folding-lounge and its rearrangements on my mind — the pink-bordered blankets and wide-hemmed sheets for Franklin and the blue borders and narrower hems for Richards. And of course the soap-dishes and towels had to be strictly individualized. What with falsehood and hard work and wearying watchfulness my nerves were already becoming shaky.

And now Sunday was coming! How to keep Miss Franklin out of her room from half past-six to half-past five, or longer, was a question that gripped me like a benumbing nightmare. I thought of several things. I had a dear married niece living away out in the suburbs in a pretty little home with a Lake view. I telephoned her, asking her as a special favor to take my guest for Saturday night and Sunday. She answered, "With pleasure!" But when I proposed the delightful outing to Miss Franklin, that young lady thanked me most sweetly and declined. The only outing she yearned for, she said, was to lie in bed one long delicious day and not see or hear a human being. I felt a little hurt, but truly the poor girl looked very tired.

Then I set about contriving how to keep Mr. Richards away. It isn't pleasant to tell a downright fib, even for love's sake, so I couldn't invent some dreadful happening that would make the room uninhabitable for a day or two. I couldn't ask him to

change rooms, for there were none to change. And it was already Saturday morning. There was nothing to be done but to boldly ask him for his room over Sunday. A friend was coming — and was she not a friend? — to stay until Monday morning, and I *must* give her a corner, hoping he would not be greatly discommoded. Mr. Richards looked surprised but answered very kindly, Oh yes, he would make some arrangement for that little time. And I carried up for his afternoon luncheon a nice bit of broiled chicken and a dish of preserved plums — I felt so relieved and so grateful — and I am sure he realized how sorry I was to trouble him.

But there were more Sundays — perhaps a whole summer of them — to follow, and hardly was this first one well over and Miss Franklin off to her work on Monday morning before the next one began to loom up. How ardently I wished the Board would throw open the Exposition on Sundays and let in the poor working people and keep Miss Franklin at her post! And then I called myself a heartless monster — thinking of her pale face and weary eyes. I tried to send Mr. Richards out to my niece for Sunday — telling him of the quiet, the refreshing lake breeze and the benefit of even a brief respite from the heat and uproar of the city; and almost in Miss Franklin's words he replied that the only respite he needed was a few hours of solid sleep and he could sleep best at home, and he pleasantly thanked me.

Then I resolved to cast myself on Miss Franklin's compassion, and to cast myself early, so that I need not have a whole week of worriment. I told her that a friend of mine was coming to spend Sunday — a person very much in need of rest — and I had no quiet corner — nothing in fact but my bedroom and the kitchen — and would she mind giving up her room just for the day — and as early in the morning as possible — as a special favor to me? Miss Franklin was lovely. She promptly answered, Yes, there was a clean, respectable hotel, only ten minutes' ride from her work, where she would go on Saturday evening and stay over Sunday; and she was glad to be of a bit of help to me, since I was always so nice to her.

I felt myself grow red with shame — thinking of my deception — but I confess I was greatly relieved, with no conflicting Sunday to consider for twelve days to come.

However, I had a sufficiency of scares during that time — one morning Miss Franklin running back for a handkerchief and finding me wildly removing her effects as if engaged in a fire-drill, and only able to stammer something about "sweeping day" — and one evening catching me just outside her door with the last armful of Mr. Richards' things — fortunately the evening was dark and rainy and the hall lamp not yet lighted — and Mr. Richards finding a thimble and a hat pin which I had clumsily overlooked and politely handing them to me without even a thought of suspicion — and such a lingering of chocolate and toasted bread in the morning and such a haunting breath of coffee and ham sandwiches in the evening — in spite of the open window and the transom and my sprinklings of lavender water, — that every day I expected my double dealing to come tumbling about my ears in disgraceful ruin.

The time fled swiftly and soon another unarranged Sunday confronted me. It was Mr. Richards' turn to be diverted from the room — and how? Elsie informed me that I was getting three wrinkles between my eyes, instead of two — and small wonder! The dear child was in the secret of my alternating lodgers, of course, and appeared to enjoy it greatly. She had all the excitement of the scheme and no worry; evidently having unlimited trust in my power to contrive, and amusing herself with timing the arrivals and departures and calculating the nearness of collisions.

But what to do with Mr. Richards? Simply I would take a bold stand and say to him that, owing to our cramped quarters, my daughter's illness and the fact that we were to have a guest for *every* Sunday (and weren't we?), he would be conferring a great favor if he would find some other room just for that day, and I would gladly make a suitable reduction in his rent and be *so* much obliged.

I made this suggestion to him with fear and trembling — for there was the chance that he might take leave altogether — and my voice faltered and the tears came into my eyes in spite of my effort to be calm and business like. The dear boy! — he had nothing for me but instant compassion and ready compliance. Perhaps he thought of his own mother, and so felt kindly to all mothers —

especially to those burdened with many anxieties. He said he could manage, somehow, he was sure; and his room, which had begun to seem like a sort of home to him, would seem all the pleasanter for these brief absences. And he certainly would *not* accept any reduction in the rent, for I was entirely welcome to such a mere neighborly accommodation.

I felt as if I could fall upon his neck, but I only thanked him hurriedly and sought the retirement of the kitchen to shed tears of grateful relief. I am aware that I cry on the least provocation, but I always feel so much better directly. And fancy, if you please, the strain under which I was living — or rather had been living, for now it would all be plain sailing, comparatively speaking, for the balance of the summer.

The next Saturday afternoon, at a quarter to six, Mr. Richards went away with hand-bag and umbrella and a smiling good-bye until Monday morning; and I flew to my work of reconstruction with a light heart. No more threatening, dreadful Sundays, and only the little minor risks of week days to look out for! No wonder I hummed a little hymn as I placed Miss Franklin's lamp and books, and work basket and fans, and slippers and dressing sacque, and calenders and photographs, and chafing dish and fruit basket in their usual places.

I was sitting beside Elsie in our room across the hall, and she was disposing of her evening meal with quite a fine little appetite, and Miss Franklin was in her room eating her frugal bread and butter and sipping hot milk, when the blow fell.

Latchkeys had already admitted the first-floor people, and so when I heard the hall-door open and close and a quick step come bounding up the stairs, I knew the end had come. Elsie, suspending her spoon, looked at our partly open door and then at me, and dared to smile. For myself, I sat turned to stone.

Evidently Mr. Richards had hastily returned for some important forgotten thing, and, never noticing the light over the transom and inferring that my guest was not to arrive until the morrow, he essayed to unlock the door whose duplicate key was in the other side. I heard Miss Franklin utter an exclamation and bound to the door, which she must have opened quite violently, for it banged against the table and made the chafing dish rattle.

The hall was dimly lighted — for I cannot afford a dazzling outlay of gas — and Miss Franklin's lamp had a subdued green shade.

"*What do you mean?*" cried Miss Franklin's voice in startled intensity.

"I beg pardon, but I left, —" began Mr. Richards.

"You are *mistaken!* This is my —"

"Excuse me; it is *my* room, and I wish to get —"

"If you don't go away this minute I'll call Mrs. Thomp —"

"*Will* you listen a moment? — I left some papers here —"

"*Mrs. Thompson!*"

— "In the side pocket of my mackintosh —"

"MRS. THOMPSON!"

"That hangs, or *did* hang an hour ago, in the corner by the —"

I got to my feet, but Elsie caught my gown and I weakly sank into my chair again. By this time they must have taken a look at each other, and there came a little cry from Miss Franklin.

"*Harry — Richards!*"

And Mr. Richards in the same breath exclaimed — "*Dora! Is it* DORA?"

Then there was such a confusion of exclamations that I could distinguish nothing for a few moments. Finally came a few sentences in Miss Franklin's clear, but slightly trembling voice:

"I am here because I am at work. Papa died in Colorado a year ago. He lost all his money, and he couldn't get over it. I am as poor as you are, now."

"Thank God!" said Mr. Richards very fervently.

"At the last, papa was very sorry for — for everything. He told me to look you up. But you had gone — goodness only knew where — and I — I didn't like to advertise."

I imagined how the dimple was dimpling at these words.

"Oh, this is a heavenly Providence!" began Mr. Richards, and the remainder of his sentence was lost to me.

"Don't you mind *now*, mummy," whispered Elsie, "they're so happy they'll forgive you everything."

And so they did.

On the Turn of a Coin.*

BY CLEVELAND MOFFETT.

DOWN the corridor, walking carefully, came four hospital attendants, holding the stretcher resting on two large wheels, rolling noiselessly. The operation was over. On the stretcher lay a young woman, unconscious. Her face was beautiful, but white as the covering sheets, and her head was wound with bandages. She breathed faintly through parted lips.

Out of the operating-room came the surgeon who had finished his work, and with him his assistants, young men in blouses and black caps, most of them wearing pointed beards. An odor of carbolic acid followed them.

"Poor girl," said one, as he watched the stretcher turn into one of the wards. "I wonder if she'll speak before she dies."

"It will be better for her assassin if she doesn't," said another.

Then they went off to various duties. Last of all came Auguste Caseau, hurrying and behindhand, as usual. He had risen late, had reached the hospital late, and had had no breakfast. Of all the medical students at the Lariboisière Hospital there was none more popular than Caseau, but the pleasures of Paris at night often made him neglect his duties of the day. In the present instance he did not know who the young woman was whom he had just seen under the knife, nor had he any idea how her skull had been crushed with such frightful wounds. All he knew was that she had remarkable beauty and was doomed to die.

He was hurrying off to a neighboring café when a stranger waiting at the door touched his arm. The man's eyes were eager, he spoke with ill-concealed excitement and seemed like one who had gone many hours without sleep.

"Tell me," he said, "did she speak?"

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Caseau shook his head, looking at the man suspiciously.

"Can she live?"

"God knows, the doctor took sixteen pieces of bone out of her head."

"Holy Mother, sixteen pieces of bone!"

Caseau was walking meantime toward the café, and the man followed him. His eagerness for information betrayed an interest in the case that argued some special knowledge, and Caseau was curious. "Will you drink?" he said, when they had taken seats at a table.

The stranger called for absinthe and drained his glass quickly. "I must ask one more question, my friend," he said. "Tell me where were the wounds on this girl's head — were they on the back?"

"They were," assented Caseau, who had ordered his breakfast.

"Were there none in front, none on the forehead nor on the face?"

Caseau shook his head. "There were none."

"How strange," muttered the man. "She was facing him when . . ."

"Facing whom?" asked Caseau sharply, and the question seemed to bring the man to his senses.

"Pardon me; I forgot that you do not know. I have been through so much for the last twelve hours that I am dazed. Do you believe in occult things, hallucinations and so on?"

Caseau was only in his second year, and the lectures on hallucinations did not begin until the third, so he answered guardedly.

"That depends," he said, with an air of holding knowledge in reserve. He questioned with his eyes, and for the first time appeared sympathetic. The man ordered another absinthe.

"I will tell you about it," he said. "I shall go mad unless I tell some one. In the first place, let me assure you that usually I am the most matter-of-fact man in Paris; I never get angry, I never get excited, but last night — " He paused and a little shiver ran over him.

"But last night," repeated Caseau encouragingly.

"It was about nine o'clock, and I was walking up the Rue

Fontaine with my hat off because the night was hot, and whistling because business had been good. You see I am a grocer down on the Street of the Four Winds. When I reached the corner of the Rue Breda, where I live, I stopped in a little cake-shop to buy some sweets for my wife. Then I hurried upstairs, two at a time, for I was eager to see her. Our apartment is on the fifth floor, looking out on the Rue Fontaine, and a balcony runs along the windows where my wife keeps flowers growing. It is a nice place to sit summer evenings, and I expected to find her there.

"Imagine my surprise, then, on opening the door, to find the apartment quite dark, except for the glow of the little night-lamp from the bedroom at the end of the corridor. And instead of seeing my wife come running to meet me, all smiles, I found absolute stillness in the place, stillness and darkness. In that moment, as I stood with the door ajar, and my hand on the knob, there came over me a creeping sense of fear, something I had never known before. It seemed to me that some great danger was lurking in the air, that some evil presence was near me. So strong was this feeling that, acting on the first impulse, I stepped back on to the landing outside and closed the door behind me.

"In an instant, however, my reason reasserted itself, and ashamed of my weakness I opened the door again, closed it sharply behind me, and double-locked it. Then hanging my hat on a hook at one side I started down the corridor. There was a distance of twenty feet that I had to traverse before reaching the bedroom, and I assure you that I never in my life endured such torture as I felt in taking those few steps. At first it was a fear for myself that held me back, but presently this was superseded by a horrible sickening fear for my wife. I saw it was she whose life was threatened, or had been threatened, for the conviction grew upon me that I had come too late. When I was half-way down the corridor, I clutched the wall with one hand and pressed the other to my brow, which was throbbing with frightful fancies. They say that drowning men see strange things as death comes on, but no drowning man, I am sure, ever saw a vision more distinct than came to me there of my poor wife."

By this time Caseau was listening intently.

"She is a beautiful woman, I beg you to believe, and I saw her

as plainly as I see you now, stretched on the bed, her face as lovely as ever in its setting of dark hair, only very pale. But there were wounds, dreadful wounds, on the back of the head, from which the pillow was stained crimson.

"But this was only the vision?" put in Caseau.

"Yes, a vision. God grant you may never haye one. I was unable to move, afraid to speak. I seemed rooted to the floor.

"Finally my will conquered, and I staggered into the bedroom. With an awful fascination my eyes sought the bed, around which were drawn the red curtains. On the side toward me, on a little table, burned the night lamp. Everything in the room seemed as usual — there was no sign that ill had come — yet I cannot tell you with what feelings I stepped forward and drew apart the curtains. My wife lay there apparently sleeping, her lovely face turned toward me, and the pillow beneath her head as white as her hand that pressed it. With a sigh of relief I sank into a chair. At that moment I was startled to hear, behind the curtains, a gasping sob, and then a burst of hysterical weeping. Hurrying to the bedside I besought my wife to be calm, assuring her that I was there to protect her.

"At last my wife recovered sufficiently to explain her fright as well as she was able to do so. She had dined alone about six o'clock and about seven had given Amandine, our servant, permission to go out for the evening. Then she had spent a little time tidying up the apartment, and about half-past seven had settled down to read in the room where we have our library. This room faces on the Rue Breda. In front of this room there is a short stretch of balcony, which ends in an iron partition that separates it from the balcony of the house adjoining, which is No. 4. It would be possible for a man to climb over this partition and step from one balcony to the other.

"As my wife read she must have dozed, for presently, although her back was turned to the window, she seemed to see a man of large stature standing on the balcony outside and peering into the room. This man had bushy red hair and eyes of the palest blue — eyes that frightened her. Presently he withdrew stealthily, climbed over the partition, and peered into a window of No. 4. Once again he drew back, seemed to hesitate, smiled with a grim

humor and noiselessly drawing a coin from his pocket spun it in the air and caught it deftly in his open palm. Then moving closer to the window for better light he nodded, put the coin back in his pocket and forthwith entered the room where my wife sat, passing easily through the long, door-like halves of the window, that were swung wide open.

"Spellbound, my wife watched the man, who paid no heed to her, but made his way at once to the bedroom, she following in mortal terror. Approaching the bed he noticed that its curtains were drawn and paused a moment, casting his eyes about him as if in search for something. Near the fireplace lay a heavy brass poker which he picked up, returning with it to the bedside. Breathless my wife watched as he put aside the curtains. A woman lay there sleeping, with her face turned away, but my wife thought it was herself. She saw the man lift the poker as if to strike, at which the woman lying in the bed started and looked toward him. At this my wife's terror burst the bonds in her throat and she cried aloud.

"Of course it was only fancy, a dream, if you like, something that was not real, for the next instant she was alone in the room. But the effect was most distressing. Do what she would she could not drive from her mind the face of that tawny-haired assassin, with his pale blue eyes. It seemed to her that he was still near her with murderous purpose. In vain, lamp in hand, she searched the apartment, and tried to convince herself that nothing was there; in vain she closed and bolted the windows opening on the balcony. That sense of nameless fear pursued her still; and whichever way she turned it seemed to her that an enemy was crouching behind her, waiting his chance to spring or strike.

"Finally she went to bed, hoping that sleep would give her some relief; but she could not sleep, she could not get her thoughts out of the morbid channel in which they were running. So, anxious, restless, sick at heart, she had waited for me to come, and my coming, alas, brought her only added terrors, for my strange delay at the door, my opening it twice and closing it, then my long pause and silence in the corridor, instead of the cheery greeting I was wont to give her, made her sure that it was not I at all, but some intruder come to do her harm, some prowling assailant of the

night, perhaps the very man whose eyes and fiery hair had frightened her so in the vision.

"Then, realizing that it was her husband who was there, the man who loved her, and that there was no danger at all, she burst into the fit of hysterical sobbing from which I had such difficulty in calming her."

"You are preventing me from eating my breakfast, sir, with your queer story," said Caseau. "And besides, I can't see what it has to do with the young woman who has just been operated on."

"Let me finish," said the man, "let me finish. We hardly slept all night, for our fears persisted in spite of the knowledge that no harm had befallen. I made matters worse by foolishly telling my wife of the fright I had experienced on entering the apartment, and my vision of the murdered woman. You will remember particularly that the wounds were on the back of the head, and you tell me that is where they really were."

"That is where they were on the woman in the hospital, but she is not your wife?"

"No, thank heaven, but you know who she is?"

"Not I," said Caseau. "I got in too late to learn any details."

"She is Marie Gagnol, who occupied the apartment adjoining ours in No. 4, Rue Breda."

"My God!" exclaimed Caseau.

Just then one of the other students came in from the hospital. "She's dead," he said. "She never spoke. But they are going to try an important experiment on her. Dr. Rosseau thinks she closed her eyes with fright at the very moment when she saw the murderer, and never opened them since. He's going to test his new apparatus for getting the last image recorded on the retina. If he succeeds it will be a new triumph for the hospital and for science."

"Gentlemen," said the stranger impressively, "if the doctor's experiment succeeds I believe on my soul that it will also be a triumph for justice."

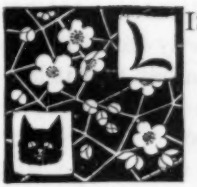
That afternoon Dr. Rosseau made the experiment, with brilliant success; it was one of the first demonstrations of the possibilities of colored photography. Registered in the sensitive film of the dead woman's eyes, was found the distinct image of a man of un-

usual size, who clutched in his hands an uplifted poker. The man's hair was red, his eyes a pale blue.

Two months later such a man died under the knife on the Place de la Roquette. He had been arrested, convicted and condemned on the sole evidence of a pair of lifeless eye-balls, supported by the testimony of a woman who had never seen him except in a vision. On the eve of his execution he made a full confession. He stated that the murder was a chance crime, prompted only by greed. He had reached the balcony running in front of Nos. 2 and 4 Rue Breda by using a rope hung from the roof. He declared that for about five minutes while he was standing outside he had hesitated whether to enter the apartment of No. 2 or No. 4. He had rested the decision on the turn of a coin.

The Man Who Met Fear.*

BY LOUISE BETTS EDWARDS.



ISTEN!"

McHenry wakened from a sound sleep, with every sense alert as when, in old war times, the reveille broke the brief rest of the camp between march and march. It was such a soft whisper, in spite of its distinctness, that he wondered if he had done such an unprecedented thing as to dream. "Funny," he murmured. "Vexatious, too. How's a man to get to sleep again?"

He threshed about from side to side in acute restlessness for a time, then forced himself to lie still while his reluctant brain revolved one after another of the various infallible processes for putting oneself to sleep — the sheep and the stone wall, the reversed multiplication table, and all the others he had heard of. The known inefficacy of all these methods is the best indication that he was not dreaming, when the whisper hissed in the air again:

"*Listen!*"

This time it was loud as well as distinct, piercing as well as sibilant, imperious as well as solemn. McHenry's senses could not start into keener consciousness than they already possessed, but as the tone of voice seemed to demand some special manifestation of his attention, a queer, quivering stream of sensation surged up his spine, climbing nerve by nerve till it reached the back of his head, which felt cold, very cold. Well, and what was he to listen for? He had not realized before that the bed was short of blankets.

"Your son, Spencer, has disappeared, and has not been heard of for three days."

McHenry dashed the covers on the footboard and sprang to the

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door, which he never locked. He flung it wide open and cast a sharp glance, that no flying figure could escape, down the lighted hall. A dim idea of some malicious lurker at the key-hole must be resigned. Besides, who would play him such a silly trick?

With a frown he resisted the impulse to raise the window higher and see if anyone could be hiding underneath it. Pshaw! he was determined not even to allow himself fear, let alone an exhibition of fear. And, anyhow, the voice came directly from his bedside; he was angry that he could not convince himself that it had not come at all. The season was winter, and his teeth were chattering already with the draught from the open door.

Some men — men not to be despised, either — would have left it open, with its flood of sociable light. McHenry sharply shut it and then scrambled back into bed, with the grim reflection that if he were a woman he would look beneath it.

"Your *son*, Spencer — your son, *Spencer* — *has* disappeared — has *disappeared* — and not been heard of for three days."

It was his disturbed mind now that was unhappily rehearsing the sinister suggestion, and the difference between those silent, impalpable utterances, that spoke to the brain without troubling the ear, and the clear, hissing syllables that had waked him; made McHenry miserably certain of the reality of the latter. His was the man's affection — latent rather than active, waiting some such shock as this to assert itself. A mother probably would not have let her only son leave home with a dozen college companions, for an extended European tour; or, letting him go, would have thought of him daily and hourly, instead of permitting him to almost slip her mind, as McHenry had done through the past few busy weeks. But — great heavens! a man might be pardoned for feeling upset over a horrid hint, conveyed in this uncanny fashion, that some mysterious danger overhung his boy! Even if a dream, it was scarcely a soothing one.

"What on earth did we eat last night?" thought McHenry, to whom indigestion was a word without meaning. Plainly, here was no clew; besides the fact that his stomach was Welsh-rabbit-proof, they had had the simplest of fare, for the sake of Heller, who was a suffering dyspeptic, eternally on diet; and for the sake of Ward, his other guest, who was an aggressive teetotaller, the

cork of so much as a beer bottle had not been popped. In addition, they had not once mentioned Spencer; he was not sure that Ward even knew he had a son.

Instead, they had talked over the old stirring times of the Civil War, in which Heller and McHenry had been the youngest and rawest of recruits, McHenry coming out of it with some medals, which he carefully kept, and a major's title, which he dropped. "Confess the truth, now, McHenry," Heller had laughingly urged. "You have proved your courage in battles enough to dare to tell us when you felt the worst scared — before action, or during it? For either before, or during, or both, scared we all were."

"If I told you the truth you would not believe me," McHenry had answered. "Ward, let's have some of *your* youthful reminiscences."

"I'd rather hear you tell the truth," said Ward, curiously.

"Well, then," McHenry had begun, slowly. "I don't know that I ever before put it into words, for fear of its sounding boastful, but the literal fact is, I never was scared at all."

"Oh, come, now!" Heller had said, banteringly.

"I told you you would say that," reminded his host. "Do you suppose I take credit for a mere mental or physical peculiarity, as for a virtue? It just happens that Fear and I never 'met up,' as our Cracker guides used to express it. As a baby I never was afraid of the dark; as a boy I never was afraid of anything, from a ghost to a whipping; as a man, my nerves — well, I don't seem to have any, that's all. It's purely physical, I tell you. Fear and I may meet some day — but I'm fifty-two years old, and there is not much time left."

This part of the conversation recurring to McHenry as he lay tossing on what had suddenly become the hardest of beds, made him thankful that he had not paid tribute to Fear by looking out of the window. Nor yet by opening the door. Nor yet by calling Padgett, his man-servant, the only other occupant of the great, lonely house. What could Padgett do, or what light on the mystery could be thrown by every gas-jet in the house, if Spencer *had* suddenly disappeared? Let's see — his last letter was four weeks old, but that was nothing uncommon. With twelve com-

panions — Great Scott! the boy made the thirteenth of the party! That cold feeling at the back of his neck recurred, and all his anger could not warm it up again. These things, taken separately, were absurd trifles, only significant to the superstitious; but they made a most disagreeably consistent total. Also, the party had departed on a Friday. He did not believe in any of that nonsense, but neither did he believe in supernatural voices delivering bedside warnings to wideawake men in their sober senses. He had only heard them, which was far more convincing. Why had he not kept Spencer at home? His letters sounded happy enough. That last one came from Switzerland — and suddenly a vivid, terrible picture flashed before him of some deep moraine or glassy cliff, with his boy's frozen face lying in the snow — or no, perhaps he had slipped and fallen on some jagged rock —

"*Padgett!*" shouted that individual's master — an unnecessary summons considering the rate at which the servants' bell was ringing. The rope had not ceased its violent vibrations against the wall before Padgett appeared, in his night raiment, rubbing his eyes. He was a sleek, mild Englishman, just entered into McHenry's service. "Yessir?" he inquired, without resentment. "You rang, sir?"

"Get me some blankets," said his master curtly. "If you know no better than to strip them off a bed in January, you won't suit *me*."

"Yessir," Padgett assented. "There was two pairs of blankets *hon*, and I didn't take any *hoff* — "

"It's a misunderstanding," said McHenry, hastily. "The room chills off just before morning. Sorry I called you up out of bed."

"Yessir. Hanythink moresir?"

McHenry hesitated. "I — I suppose you locked up everything downstairs to-night, didn't you?" He was aware that it was the first time he had ever known or cared whether there was a key or bolt in the house. "So that — it wouldn't be possible for anyone to get in?"

Padgett was sure he had.

After the man's withdrawal, McHenry set his teeth and said distinctly, positively, almost roughly: "The boy's all right, you fool!" and in spite of a laborious mental review of the momentous facts

that twelve twelves are one hundred and forty-four, twelve elevens one hundred and thirty-two, and so forth — or backward — managed before morning to obtain a frayed and ragged sort of sleep, worn so thin in spots as to let dreams through. The value of these visions as mirrors of one's closest thoughts and cares was proven by his dreaming, not of Spencer, but of a flour-mill run by an ancient goat, to which he, as a farmer, brought a sack of meal that the goat would not grind for fear of catching his beard between the millstones.

In the morning he resolutely left for business before the mail came — the Monday's mail, when the foreign letters were delivered. With a white, letterless plate staring up into his eyes, he might possibly, after fifty-two free years, meet Fear at last. "I can't afford it," he said decisively. When at noon-time he encountered the husband of his only daughter, who said: "Hello! why don't you come take dinner with us to-night?" he felt he could not afford to accept the invitation, either. Mary might mention that she had not heard from Spencer lately, and when she found that he too had no recent news, might ask, in a woman's idiotic way, "You don't suppose anything could happen to him?" and the question, on top of last night's experience, might upset his present perfect mental balance.

That was why he did not cable Professor Rush, who had charge of Spencer's party, and end the suspense. Had not Professor Rush also access to telegraph wires, in case anything had happened to Spencer? and what right had he, Randolph McHenry, to have such a thing as suspense over a silence which was the rule, rather than the exception, with his heir, "just because of a mysterious ——" He sought around for a noun to follow the adjective, and could not find it.

Nevertheless, as he approached the house that night he felt a queer sensation, more familiar to the rest of us than to him, Randolph McHenry. Poets describe this sensation as "the heart standing in the mouth," but it is more like a sudden, awe-inspiring flop of the stomach. The silver letter-tray on the hall table was quite empty. All his business mail went down town.

"No letters, Padgett?" asked McHenry. The man was new. He might have put it somewhere else.

"Nosir," said Padgett.

That night's rest for McHenry was broken, not by the voice of warning, but by his expectation of the voice. In default of its impressive command to "Listen!" he listened for hours, in a physical state which he defined as "feeling as if an ice-cold hair — just one — were being slowly and relentlessly trailed all over your body," and a mental state which he could not define. Somehow, his not hearing it to-night increased, rather than removed, his conviction that it had been no hallucination last night. Someone's trick, perhaps? Someone who had been nettled to hear him declare himself free from fear. But Heller and Ward were the only men in whom he had ever thus confided. Quick distrust of them both surged up in him. Heller loved a practical joke. Ward had one of those reputations for knowing a great deal that cost men the confidence of their fellows. He knew himself to be thinking absurdities, and continued to think them.

"No letters, Padgett?" he asked, the next Thursday. Knowing that the next foreign mail came in on that day, he had waited for the postman this time. As the man answered in the negative, his master looked with sudden attention into his blinking-lidded, superhumanly respectful countenance. It had occurred to him during the past few days that there might be a conspiracy against him. It occurred to him now that Padgett might be part of it. It was such an easy matter to suppress a letter. Now that he thought of it, the man looked sly. He had taken him on the recommendation of a friend; but perhaps all his friends had some spite or scheme against him, to be mysteriously gained by attacking his one vulnerable spot — his deep, undemonstrative love for his boy.

Feverishly explaining that he had some private papers to attend to — he felt a nervous need of propitiating Padgett, or at least throwing him off his guard — he stayed at home from the office to watch the man. Why need the fellow wear those confounded felt slippers, so that you never knew where he might be lurking? Every time the bell rang he stole out into the hall, as softly as though he himself might be felt-shod, to see if it were the postman. By afternoon, he acted on a sudden impulse to send the man out on a fictitious errand, that he might tend the door himself.

Still no letter came. Perhaps the postman was in it — whatever "it" might be. "*Cub!*" he suddenly broke out, with the strong, savage resentment we only feel against those we love and worry over. "Why the devil can't he write? Is he in it, too?"

In the evening Ward dropped in with the news that Heller was in a hospital. It was significant of McHenry's self-engrossment that only his second thought was of sympathy and concern for his friend, his first being: "Well, *he* has nothing to do with it."

"Yes," continued Ward, "we had not left your house ten minutes the other night when he had one of his old acute attacks, almost amounting to convulsions. I called a cab and sent him at once to the hospital."

McHenry's fist came down on the table. "Poison!" he shouted, to the other's astonishment. "I had bad dreams myself that very night, and I believe that scoundrel Padgett drugged or poisoned or did something to the food."

Ward stared at him: "Why, McHenry, you're sick, man! Poison — nonsense! Heller has these attacks periodically. You want bromo-seltzer to settle your nerves. Had I not better stay all night with you?"

But McHenry shortly refused. If he was going crazy, he would go crazy alone. Besides, if the voice spoke to-night, he might be startled into betraying symptoms which Ward — not having known him so long as Heller — might interpret as fear. He almost wished the voice *would* come again, that he might analyze it, and dispassionately decide whether it were fact or fancy; that he might question it; that it might give him some such comforting intelligence that Spencer had turned up all right, and that he, McHenry, would hear from him on the following Monday — good God! how long to wait! — or that he could give a fierce spring at the impalpable presence that uttered the words, and choke the life out of it, if life it had. But though he listened and quivered all night, it did not come.

He had retired leaving his door open — breaking the habit of a lifetime. Toward morning he rose and locked it — another deviation from the habit.

Yet, somehow, he could not bring himself to cable. It was *their* place to wire him if anything were wrong. Consequently,

nothing was wrong, since they had not wired him. There was much logic and little comfort in this view, which he knew another blank Monday would abruptly destroy. "Padgett!" he began sternly, when the Monday came, and with it no letter; then stopped, and dismissed the man. The time had come to yield to a senseless disquiet, give heed to a superstitious presentiment, and cable at once to know if all were well with Spencer. Of course, only one answer could come; and he well knew the dear laconic initials which would revive his sickening heart more than tomes of logic: "Dear G.: O. K. Yours, S. McH."

"My son!" he cried out in anguish grown suddenly unbearable. He bowed his head, realizing that he had finally met Fear. With fingers no longer clenched to disguise their tremblings, he wrote a brief, agonized question on a telegraph blank and rang the messenger call, unwilling to trust Padgett in such a matter. While he waited for an answer, the habit of self-restrained years flickered up in him in a faint revulsion against things he could not justify to his common sense. If Mary had no news from Spencer, either, then he would send the message. He would go to Mary's; fifty-two was old, very old, to be alone in a house with a smooth, blinking devil of a servant, whose every movement made him start and cringe — for it had come to that pass — and liable to calls from friends who might be in the damnable conspiracy against his peace.

When the messenger came he sent him for a cab, and bidding Padgett forward any mail (what a sardonic joke, with the whole postal and telegraph systems of Europe and America agreed to keep him on tenterhooks about his son!) was swiftly driven to his daughter's house. Mary met him in the hall.

"Father!" she cried, in alarm. "Why, your face is gray as — gray! Is it Spencer? He has not written me for weeks, but I thought nothing of it."

The bell rang violently while she spoke, and McHenry's hot hand felt for hers. "It's a telegram," he murmured, huskily, "saying, '*Your son Spencer has disappeared, and has not been heard of*' — Give it to me, you fool!" to the leisurely messenger boy whom Padgett had sent with the letter which had arrived only a moment after his departure. "Don't stand staring up the staircase like that!"

"Somebody in dere's got hysterics," confided the employé of the A. D. T. to the cabman, who still waited for his dismissal. "An' it ain't de lady, eider. Say, my grit ain't never gone back on me, an' I'm clost on fifteen now."

McHenry clawed piteously at the letter, which his nervous fingers could not get open. "You tear the envelope," he said to Mary; then, snatching it jealously from her, read:

DEAR DAD: — I'm O. K., and would have written sooner but that I knew you knew I was all right, and—Dad, I've been busy chasing *her*. 'Nuff said, isn't it! I met her at a hotel in Geneva; her party was going back to Paris, and I hadn't been introduced, and I just jumped on the train in lots less time than it takes to write this, and it was three days before it occurred to me that the fellows might wonder what had become of me. Dad, I'll write you all about her if she says she'll have me. At present, my head's in a whirl.

It's a good thing for you and me, however, that Dowling broke his leg. Sounds humane, doesn't it? Fact is, the rest of the party got as nervous as a set of old women when I simply disappeared, without even a trunk or handbag, to say nothing of a good-bye — which I own I was crazy enough to do. They went on to the village that came next on our itinerary, leaving messages for me to follow if I returned. At the end of three days they got scared — especially Dowling — and nothing would do but that he should go back to Geneva, cable to you and set detectives looking for me. On the way his foot went through a bridge and he broke a leg, and was taken in and nursed by mountaineers. They couldn't speak a word of his tongue, nor he of theirs, so there was no way whatever to send his message, thus luckily saving you considerable uneasiness over your prodigal son. Dowling did his best, however; he's a studious thing, deeply interested in psychology and all that ruck, and he says he lay awake in the night trying to send you a telepathic communication that I had disappeared and had not been heard of for three days. Glad he didn't succeed, as I wrote them the very next day.

I ought to write lots more, but if you got a longer letter you'd feel sure it was a forgery in the name of Yours neglectfully,

SPENCER.

"Mary," said McHenry, heavily sinking back, "he's all right. I don't know whether you understand it or not, but your brother Spencer is all right."

"*You're* not all right," said his daughter, with a frown in her forehead. "You were never like this before. I shall send for the doctor."

The doctor came, talked vaguely of nerves *not quite* in their normal condition, of the restorative effects of sea-voyages, and finally, when McHenry opened the lips which he had at first obstinately kept sealed, of the objective and subjective mind.

"Your sub-consciousness was probably charged over-heavily with your son's absence," he explained, "whether you knew you worried about him or not — "

("Good gracious!" interpolated McHenry, dismally. "Have

I got a thing like that inside of me? If I'd known that, I'd have been afraid long ago.")

— "And you either dreamed an oddly coincident dream, or really were in telepathic sympathy with that abnormally persevering young man. More than that *I* don't know. If you want more light, consult a clairvoyant; my business is repairing the ravages of the Welsh rabbit and the pneumococcus."

"No, I thank you," said his patient, with a shudder. "The first stage of insanity is *quite* enough for me."

"Hello!" Ward was hailed by Heller — now as brisk a semi-invalid as ever hospital discharged — a few days later. "Whom do you suppose I met on the deck of the *Sabrina* when I went to see another friend off? Whom but McHenry? Says he will join his son somewhere on the Continent; has had a complete nervous breakdown and is ordered rest. Doesn't sound credible, his having nerves, does it?"

"Oh," said Ward, "we all have them."

The Transposition of Stomachs.*

BY CHARLES E. MIXER.

Y Dear Elliott:

Since your departure for elsewhere with your bonny bride, some two years ago, our correspondence has been of the chills and fever sort, I furnishing the chills and you the fever, intermittent at that.

During the last year I have been more delinquent than ever, partly from stress in my feelings and condition, and the remainder from a desire to throw no cloud over your very evident happiness, for in sympathy you were never bankrupt, as your friend well knows.

It was about this same time a year ago that that arch-enemy of man's comfort, dyspepsia, laid his grip on me, and, may the plague take him, continued to tighten it. I resorted, of course, to our friends the doctors — of whom I had many, and many of whom you know — too many, no doubt, and too often, and the help I got was nil.

You have often done me great honor in terming me the most artistically finished article of a gourmet you ever saw. I never quarreled with your conception of me, and after you left even thought you fell short of the truth. You knew me a fairly genial, good-natured chap, with a keg of humor always on tap to my friends, but, alas, after a while the keg ran dry and in its place stood a barrel of wormwood. I considered how long I might be allowed to remain here, or, to follow more nearly my line of thought, how long I should be compelled to. I assure you I had no wish to give up my occupation as gourmet, though there seemed no help for it.

Well, one evening I sat warming my shins before my open fire, dreaming of what might have happened had I married Ethel, as

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you urged. I might have been, perhaps, the happy father of children. But this was not to be; I became instead the father of a thought, an idea or revelation, or anything you like. As I mused, my great idea grew and flourished in my mind. As you have destined yourself for the noble profession of medicine, I at once made you godfather to this creation of my brain, and now you will, no doubt, be interested to learn the details of its results, if you have not already heard of them. My idea was no less than the transposition or exchange of stomachs, in which I saw a hope for a new and healthy existence in my old rôle of gourmet. To carry out my thought I needed the help of one we both know, the distinguished surgeon, Dr. Dickson, and of another person, whom we did not know. Next morning I found myself possessed of distinctly more faith in the plan than I had the night before, which decided me. You well know of the doctor's wonderful operations, and I knew him to be the very man for this one, if such existed. I found him, and with considerable diffidence communicated my scheme. Before I had fairly finished he jumped to his feet and exclaimed, "By Jove! I believe it possible; but how can you find the other man?" I admitted that this might be difficult, but thought I knew a suitable subject. "See him," he said, "see him, and if he will consent, I will."

You know that before I retired from business, with enough to last several lifetimes, I was President of the Island Sound Steamship Company. Among the 'longshoremen I knew one Jerry Kelly, a strapping, robust, rosy-cheeked fellow, about my size and build, the picture of health and the possessor of a good wife and a big family of children. I knew him quite well, as I had often given him odd jobs when the boats were not in. The next evening I sent for him, "as I had something for him to do." I had him shown into the dining room, where the sideboard displayed a fine joint of beef, some cold cabbage, a bottle of whiskey and a few other things. I think he saw these before he did me.

"Have you had supper, Jerry?"

"I belave I have, sor," he said.

"You believe you have? Well, suppose you tackle this, and then say you *know* you have."

"With great pleasure, sor."

The way he closed with that beef would have made a reputation for a tackle on a college eleven and I, looking on, green with envy, said:

"Have you a big appetite, Jerry?"

"So big, sor, that I niver yet saw the end of it."

"Is it always with you, Jerry?"

"I niver yet lost sight of it," he mumbled with his great mouth full of beef.

"Just one more question, Jerry. Do you ever have a feeling of distress after your meals?"

"Yis, sor, I do that, for it's the big meals I like and it's the small one I do be gettin' some days; it's after thim that I have that same feeling of dishtress that there wasn't more of it."

"I reckon you are sound, Jerry, in stomach and wit. Don't spare the grog, for I have a big job for you to consider and no mistake."

"What is it, sor?" he asked.

"Well, Jerry, you have a fine stomach, and I haven't. I have plenty of money and you haven't. I propose to exchange."

"Aw, don't be joshin' me, sor!" said he.

And then I told him of the wonderful things Dr. Dickson had done, and how I thought this could be accomplished, and no damage to either. Would you believe it? He seemed to fall in with my idea.

"It's a rishky job when all's said, and what is it worth, sor?"

"Twenty-five thousand," said I.

"Whew!" said he, "and how about Nora, and the children, if——"

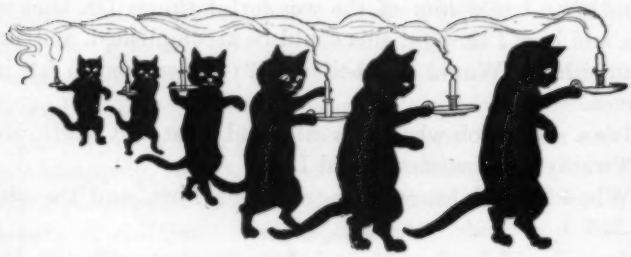
"Jerry," said I, "here it is; before we start with the Doctor I make my will, in which I leave you twenty-five thousand dollars, in case I go; if I live, I pay it to you; if you go I pay it to Nora; do you see?"

"Faith I do, sor, and for the sake of Nora and the kids, and your faith in your big doctor, begorra I'll try it, so I will," and with that we took hands and a big noggin to our success, and parted.

Well, when the Doctor heard all this he was game, and carried out his part at the Park Hospital before a select few of the pro-

fession. As to the result — well, I am writing this and shall soon resume my rôle of gourmet.

Jerry is also all right all round, though he says he has no appetite, poor chap, and is cheerful as a sparrow. No wonder, from his standpoint, for, attend to this! Directly he got about he went to a friend of his, even tougher than he was, and succeeded in driving the same identical bargain with him for *five thousand!* So, if all goes well, Jerry will have a better stomach than he ever had, and twenty thousand in the bank. What will eventually become of my old stomach, I can't at present tell; perhaps I may be able to inform you later.



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